

Horticulture News

UF/IFAS Nassau County Extension

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Firebush—*Hamelia Patens*

Indigenous to most of South America, the West Indies, Mexico, and southern Florida, Firebush earns its name by producing a showy mass of tubular, bright reddish-orange flowers from early summer until late fall, attracting butterflies and hummingbirds. It also produces a showy fruit; the edible juicy berry, relished by birds, turns from green to yellow, to red, and finally, black when ripe. In Mexico, the berry is turned into wine.

In its native habitat, Firebush is known more for its herbal properties than for its beauty. The

crushed leaves have been used for tanning, applied to cuts and bruises and added to vinegar to relieve skin rashes. The plant is also used for washes and lotions to relieve swelling of the legs. In the West Indies a syrup from the berry is used as a remedy for dysentery.



Due to its good looks and its adaptability to hot, dry weather or hot, humid weather, Firebush is often

promoted as a landscape plant in the Southern United States. Firebush is salt tolerant and will grow in any kind of soil as long as it is well drained. It is a semi-woody shrub or small tree in zones 10-11, and a perennial that dies to the ground in winter and sprouts back in spring in zones 8-9. Firebush also is grown as an annual or a potted plant in colder zones. Propagate by soft wood cuttings in spring or by seed.

Take All Root Rot

This disease is caused by the fungus *Gaeumannomyces graminis*. Disease symptoms in affected areas of turf are irregular in shape and may resemble those of brown patch. It also may be mistaken for chinch bug damage or drought symptoms. Patches of diseased St. Augustine grass or centipede at first appear yellow-

ish green and then die. As diseased stolons die, severe thinning occurs in areas of several feet to entire lawns. Remember that this is a root disease; by the time leaf symptoms are noticeable, the roots have already been severely damaged. Another symptom of take-all root rot is the ease of lifting stolons from the soil. You can mini-

mize the disease by following practices that reduce turf stresses. Do not water excessively. Avoid applying high rates of lime, and maintain a soil pH of 5.5 to 6.0. Mow at recommended heights with a sharp blade. Avoid ammonium nitrate fertilizer, and use acidifying fertilizers such as ammonium sulfate or slow-

release urea. Maintain recommended levels of potassium. Do not use root-inhibiting herbicides on infected lawns. Few fungicides provide acceptable control, but sterol inhibitors such as Eagle or Bayleton may help, as well a stobulurin fungicide such as Heritage.

Program Announcements

Neighborhood Storm-water/ Landscape Program

Provide your neighborhood with information about proper landscape and pond maintenance practices that will protect Florida's natural waterways. St. John's River Water Management/WAVE Representative Paula Staples and Rebecca L. Jordi, University of Florida / IFAS Horticulture Extension Agent will come for a free consultation.

This program must have a minimum of ten (10) participants.

Troubleshooting Florida Landscapes

Do you and your neighbors need a personal consultation on how to solve landscape problems? Are you concerned about your trees, shrubs, or lawngrass thriving?

Rebecca L. Jordi, University of Florida/IFAS Horticulture Extension Agent and Nassau County Master Gardener Volunteers will come for a free group consultation.

This program must have a minimum of six (6) participants.

Landscape Matters

July 13th Mulch
Master Gardener Mike McKay
August 17th
Right Plant Right Place
Rebecca Jordi
Peck Center Auditorium
Wednesday 10 - 11AM
516 S. 10th Street
Fernandina Beach

These programs are free to the public, so please call us at 904-879-1019 or e-mail rljordi@ifas.ufl.edu if you plan to attend. If response is too small, the program will be canceled.



Zebra Longwing Butterfly Florida's State Insect

The state's newest symbol was designated on April 26, 1996 at the request of garden clubs across the state. The zebra longwing has elongated, black wings with yellow stripes, a thin abdomen and long antennae. The butterfly's brilliant colors serve as a warning to predators of its nauseating taste if

eaten. The diet of the longwing larvae consists entirely of passion flowers.

Zebra butterflies seem to be the most intelligent of butterflies and have a structured social life. The zebra longwings sleep in groups and return to the same roost every night. The oldest butterflies seem to have first choice

at sleeping perches. At dawn the first butterfly up wakes the others by gently touching them.



Master Gardener Volunteer Program

Do you love plants, trees, and gardening? Would you enjoy volunteering your time to help teach youth and newcomers in your community? Are you a team player?

Then perhaps you should become a University of Florida/IFAS Master Gar-

dener Volunteer! It requires 50 hours of volunteer time to be given back to Nassau County Extension the first year and 25 hours every year thereafter. Ten sessions held on Wednesdays will begin in the middle of August and end in November. Textbooks will cost \$70. If

you are interested and would like an application packet please call 904 879-1019 or email rljordi@ifas.ufl.edu. Interviews for the Master Gardener Program will begin near the end of July and selection will occur by the first week of August.



“To Do” List for July

Annuals: Water annuals if we receive less than 1/4 inch of rain every few days. Water container gardens daily. Too much water can cause root rot.

Bulbs: Separate bulbs and give away to friends. Bulbs planted too deeply need to be removed. Transplant bulbs if the area is receiving too much water.

Lawns: Mower blade may need sharpening by now, add iron to green up lawn but avoid nitrogen fertilization this month. "Take-all-root-rot" will be in full force during the summer - be sure to avoid over watering and over fertilizing.

Perennials: Cut off old flower heads, prune off dead or insect infested areas, and pinch off tips of stems to encourage denser growth.

Trees: Remove seed head of crape myrtles to encourage blooming through September. Remove old flower and seed stalks. Prune now for trees that flower in the winter. Fertilize palms and fruit trees.

Vegetables: It's too hot to be planting anything now. However, this is a good month to solarize your potential fall garden. Till your plot, moisten the soil, cover the ground with clear plastic. Place heavy objects around the edges to keep the plastic from blowing away. Let the sun bake your soil. It will help control fungi and nematodes. After 30 days till soil, replace the plastic and bake another few weeks. Plant your August or September garden.



“To Do” List for August

Flowers: Plant asters, balsam, begonias, black-eyed Susan, blue daze, cats whiskers, coleus, cosmos, cockscombs, dianthus, forget-me-not, gaillardia, golden globe impatiens, marigolds, melampodium, moon vine, pentas, periwinkles, petunias, phlox, porterweed, portulaca, purslane, salvia, scabiosa, strawflowers, sunflowers, tithonias, torenia, verbena, and zinnias.

Bulbs: Plant African Iris, agapanthus, amaryllis, cannas, crinums, daylilies, gladioli, gloriosa lilies, society garlic, and rain lilies (Zephyranthes).

Lawns: Now is a good time to install a bahiagrass lawn, probably the most care-free of the home lawngresses. Mole crickets are the only major problem, and good controls are available. It is the only practical grass for a lawn without irrigation. The turf turns brown in a drought, but grows back when it rains.

Perennials: Many perennials can be started from saved seeds, such as salvia, violets, ruellia, lion's ear, gerbera daisy, butterfly weed, and blanket flower. Let seeds dry on the plants. When pods open, bring seeds inside and dry on screen or cheesecloth. Put into a plastic bag or a jar and label. Keep the seeds in the vegetable section of the refrigerator. Use within one year. Do not store in the freezer!

Trees: Cut back unwanted limbs to a branch angle or the trunk. Remove old fronds and seed stalks from palms. Do not apply paints or coverings to wounds. Remove old seedheads from crape myrtle trees to encourage additional blooms.

Vegetables: August plantings are especially important for corn, eggplant, pumpkins, peppers, tomatoes, and watermelons. Beware of cutworms.

“Now is a good time to install a bahiagrass lawn.”



UF/IFAS Nassau County Extension

543350 US Highway #1

Callahan, FL 32011

E-mail: rljordi@ifas.ufl.edu

If you would like to receive this newsletter in color via e-mail, contact Rebecca Jordi at the above e-mail address.

Sincerely,
 

Rebecca L. Jordi,
Environmental Horticultural Agent

We are on the web!

<http://nassau.ifas.ufl.edu/>

The enclosed material is provided as one of the many services relating to the educational programs offered by the University of Florida/Nassau County Cooperative Extension service. Our nationwide network of faculty is prepared to provide current information on food, agriculture, marine and natural resource science, energy, nutrition, family, youth, and related fields. We will be happy to help you with additional information upon request. For more information about this document contact the Nassau County Extension Service at 879-1019. (V/TDD via the Florida Relay service is 1-800-955-8771.) For individuals with documented print related disabilities, this publication is available in alternative format upon specific request. The use of trade names in this publication is solely for the purpose of providing specific information. It is not a guarantee, warranty, or endorsement of the product named and does not signify that they are approved to the exclusion of others. Programs are available to all people without regard to sex, race color, creed or national origin.

Herb of the Month - Mexican Mint Marigold



Tagetes lucida

What plant is attractive to bees, birds, and butterflies, has beautiful bright yellow edible flowers, thrives in the hot humid South where other herbs languish, is drought tolerant once established, has no pests because its scent repels insects, is hardy in winter to temperatures of 20°F and is delicious in teas, wines, salads, sauces, fish, poultry dishes, vinaigrette, and even desserts? Almost too good to be true, meet Mexican

mint marigold, *Tagetes lucida*, also known as Texas tarragon.

Native to the mountains of Mexico and Guatemala, a powder made from Cloud Plant, as it is known in these regions, was used by Ancient Aztec chieftains to calm victims of sacrificial rituals.

In the kitchen, mint marigold can be used as a substitute for French tarragon. Chop fresh leaves and use them to season various dishes,

or brew into a sweet, anise flavored tea. Leaves may also be dried and stored in a sealed glass container which is protected from extreme heat and light.

The flavor of mint marigold is very similar to tarragon, but breaks down more quickly when heated, it should be added at the end of cooking. For salads, vinegar, oils, or other recipes, it may be substituted for tarragon in equal proportions.